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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ BALLON (Uruguay)

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AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/47/3, A/47/82-S/23512, A/47/83, A/47/132, A/47/212-E/1992/54, A/47/222-E/1992/57 and Corr.1, A/47/225-S/23998, A/47/267, A/47/278-E/1992/77, A/47/283-E/1992/83, A/47/289-E/1992/68, A/47/294-E/1992/84, A/47/338, A/47/375-S/24429, A/47/403, 407, 408, 411, 445, 446, 449 and 627; A/C.2/47/L.2 and L.5)

1. Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada), noting with satisfaction the progress in restructuring and revitalizing the work of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, said that Canada supported the establishment of a two-tiered governance system for United Nations operational activities, as had been recommended by the Nordic countries. A considerably strengthened Economic and Social Council should be the first tier, with the authority to give policy direction to the four development organizations under its direct jurisdiction, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP. There was also a need to strengthen the relationship between the Council, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the specialized agencies, so that Council decisions would carry weight throughout the United Nations development system. Existing agreements between the United Nations and the specialized agencies should be revised, to reflect the new emphasis on coordination. ACC should concentrate on supplying the Council with reliable data and acting as a forum for working out the measures required to implement the Council's decisions.

2. Under its new governance responsibilities, the Council should assume a major role in assessing the United Nations development system, and it would also be the appropriate forum for review of the common country strategy documents. For those and other new responsibilities to be met fully, it would surely be necessary to add one or two weeks to the Council's annual meeting.

3. With regard to the second tier, Canada shared the view of the Nordic countries that the governing bodies of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP should focus essentially on operational issues. The ideal situation would be for those bodies to act as small, professional, "working boards" exercising their functions in close collaboration with management. They should meet frequently but briefly throughout the year to take substantive decisions on operational matters. UNDP's Capacity 21 programme had been criticized for having been initiated without Governing Council approval vividly demonstrating the need for operational governance to be exercised more than once or twice every year.

4. There did not seem to be an existing United Nations department in place to provide the management support which would be required to implement the decisions of the new Council and the governing bodies. The Secretariat would have to be restructured, with coordination being its prime mandate and role.

(Mr. Baillargeon, Canada)

5. It was important, too, to link the reformed United Nations development system to the post-United Nations Conference on Environment and Development institutional structures which would oversee the implementation of Agenda 21. It certainly would not be desirable for the Commission on Sustainable Development and the rest of the United Nations development system to drift into two unrelated spheres of activity. A new Secretariat structure, with one operating arm for the Council and another for the Commission, might be the route to take, particularly as it would help solidify the overriding concept of sustainable development as the central guiding principle for all United Nations organizations and agencies engaged in international development work.

6. Canada was pleased to see that the International Conference on Population and Development would concentrate on the linkages between population and sustainable development. It believed that non-governmental organizations had much to contribute to any examination of population and development issues, and hoped that they would participate fully in the Conference. Since it considered the forthcoming Conference as one of the most important events in the United Nations calendar in the current decade, his Government had established a committee to coordinate Canadian preparations for the Conference.

7. Mr. HOSSEINI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that global economic problems could be solved only in the context of consensus on such issues as development, the environment, finance, trade and the transfer of technology and further efforts were therefore required to promote international understanding. To that end, Iran supported the suggestion by Pakistan on the establishment of an open-ended working group on enhancing international cooperation for development but stressed that progress in that area must not be achieved at the cost of the system's ability to deal with the needs of the developing countries. Instead, all reforms should aim to increase the responsiveness of the system to international economic conditions in general and to the problems of the developing nations in particular.

8. With regard to structural reforms, his delegation fully supported broadening the scope of the high-level segment to include, inter alia, macroeconomic coordination at the global level. At the same time, the operational activities segment should be expanded with a view to decentralizing the activities of the system to the country level, thereby enhancing its role in the overall development process of the developing countries. Structural reforms were not in themselves sufficient, however, to guarantee the success of operational activities, which must be supported by adequate financial resources. The open-ended working group should therefore explore means of ensuring a stable supply of resources to the operational activities of the system.

9. The report of the Secretary-General on the question of Palestine (A/47/294) furnished additional evidence of the inhumane practices of the occupying authorities towards the legitimate owners of those territories. Settlers were being encouraged, with loans and tax incentives, to move into

(Mr. Hosseini, Islamic Republic of Iran)

the new settlements, while the indigenous Arab population faced enormous difficulties even in obtaining building permits. Listing other measures intended to disrupt Arab life in those territories, he called on the international community to put an end to the inhumane policies of the occupying authorities and to restore the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State on the entire land of Palestine.

10. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) said that democracy and political and economic reforms were crucial prerequisites for social and economic progress. It was a matter for satisfaction that the new political circumstances had changed the climate of discussions in the Economic and Social Council. Ukraine was basically satisfied with the new organization of work of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and convinced of the viability of resolution 45/264. However, reform of the Council should not be limited to administrative and organizational innovations, but should serve to strengthen the work of the Council, which was called upon to develop a global approach and achieve a constructive balance of interests of the international community, particularly regarding the countries in transition. Ukraine welcomed Council resolution 1992/40 on activities of the United Nations system in the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States and hoped that a similar resolution might be adopted at the current session of the General Assembly. In that connection his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Lithuania. Economic and social reform was an essential element in the debate on means of strengthening international cooperation for development.

11. The open exchange of views that had taken place during the high-level segment had made possible an in-depth analysis of that complex issue. The high-level segment should be made into a true forum for intergovernmental consultations on international economic and social problems. His delegation agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Technical Cooperation for Development that debates in the high-level segment should be limited to a single topic and be conducted in a spontaneous and unofficial manner. An important topic feature of the session had been the discussion of proposals, in particular of the northern countries, on ways to reform the United Nations operational activities in order to enhance management efficiency and avoid duplication and fragmentation of organizational structure at Headquarters and in the field. However, care should be taken not to complicate the management system of the economic and social sector. Cumbersome organizational structures were not conducive to effectiveness. Careful consideration should be given to the usefulness of creating new bodies to guide operational activities. Participation of Member States in such bodies should be based on the strict and fair observance of the principle of rotation.

12. Ukraine attached great importance to the question of the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. While his delegation was

(Mr. Goumenny, Ukraine)

not in full agreement with the Secretary-General's report on that issue, he welcomed Council resolution 1992/38.

13. Ukraine welcomed the adoption of Council resolution 1992/27 recommending the convening of a world summit for social development in 1995. It supported the holding in 1994 of the International Conference on Population and Development and it welcomed the approval by the Council of the draft declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. There had been interesting discussions at the session on the development of regional cooperation, in particular regarding the advantages of making broader use of the regional commissions to implement the decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and on industrial development in Africa, as well as human rights, poverty eradication, support to vulnerable groups of the population and the fight against and prevention of AIDS. The reform process must become an integral part of the everyday work of the Council.

14. His delegation agreed with the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report on the impact of the evolution of East-West relations on global growth and development (A/47/403), in particular regarding the absence of any substantial negative impact for most developing countries from the events in the East. Ukraine concurred with the statements of the representatives of Poland, Lithuania, the Russian Federation and Belarus regarding that document.

15. Ms. YANG Yanyi (China) said that the extensive discussions held during the High-Level Segment had marked a good start in the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, and expressed the hope that in future, the High-Level Segment would focus on one policy theme of major concern to the international community and the developing countries in particular. China supported the proposal of the Group of 77 that the High-Level Segment should give ongoing consideration to the question of global macroeconomic policies.

16. Given the ever-widening gap between North and South and between rich and poor, the United Nations should accord as much importance to development as it did to international conflict. The restructuring exercise should be governed by the principles of democracy, equity, objectivity, rationality, balance and effectiveness. Moreover, the regional commissions could play an important role in the promotion of development and international cooperation, and their role should be enhanced.

17. At its forty-eighth session, which had been held in April in Beijing, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted a declaration setting forth principles to guide regional economic cooperation. It launched a decade for the disabled in Asia and the Pacific and undertook to hold the fifth trade fair in Asia and the Pacific. A new momentum had been created to strengthen regional economic and social development, with a view to increasing the positive contribution of the Asian and Pacific region to global development and international cooperation.

(Ms. Yang Yanyi, China)

18. As a developing country and the most populous nation in the world, China attached great importance to the issue of population. It actively supported the planned International Conference on Population and Development, and was committed to assisting in the preparatory work so that the Conference should be a success.

19. Mrs. KHANUM (Bangladesh) said that no bold initiative had yet been taken to bridge the widening gap between rich and poor countries. The developing countries were locked in a major development crisis, which was exacerbated by the continuing recession in the industrialized countries. Against that background, Bangladesh was encouraged to see that progress was being made towards restructuring and revitalizing the Council. It fully endorsed the position of the Group of 77, and noted with satisfaction that the paper submitted by Bangladesh had been accepted as a basis for further negotiations within the Group.

20. The 1980s had seen continued marginalization of the least developed countries. The latter had undertaken to initiate far-reaching national measures to address their most daunting development problems, and the rest of the international community had undertaken to do as much as possible to help them. Bangladesh hoped that the developed countries would remain committed to that goal despite the current uncertainties in the global economic scene.

21. The least developed countries had embarked on fundamental policy reforms to revive output and growth, to encourage private initiative, to provide incentives to productive sectors, to develop human resources and to restore monetary and fiscal discipline; however, given the enormity of the challenges facing them, those actions alone were not enough. Official development assistance would have to be increased substantially in order for those countries to break the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s clearly set out the commitments of the international community in that important regard.

22. Since the adoption of the Programme of Action, and following the application of a new set of criteria, six new countries had been added by the General Assembly to the list of least developed countries. That would have substantial implications as far as resources were concerned. Bangladesh was concerned that the targets for assistance to the least developed countries might not be met, and called for appropriate measures to be taken.

23. Sustained and comprehensive action was also necessary to deal with the external indebtedness of the least developed countries and a number of developed countries had already provided significant debt relief. Additional resources should be sought not only through increased levels of development assistance but also by encouraging non-debt-creating resource flows such as direct foreign investment.

(Mrs. Khanum, Bangladesh)

24. Bangladesh welcomed the decision to hold the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. Her Government was determined to fulfil its commitment on population control; its population policy sought to integrate family planning with nation-building activities, to ensure health care facilities for mother and child and to establish the two-child family as the norm.

25. However, the complexity and vastness of the problems of population, poverty and sustainable development suggested that without international cooperation and assistance it would be difficult to attain the desired objectives. The efforts of the developing countries to arrest population growth needed more assistance, and Bangladesh commended the efforts of UNFPA to raise extrabudgetary funds for that purpose.

26. Mr. NCHAPI (Lesotho) associated his delegation fully with the statement made by the delegate of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77. His delegation attached great importance to the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development and hoped that the reports and recommendations of the preparatory meetings and conferences would be transmitted to the capitals of the various Member States. The regional commissions had an important role to play in the preparatory process for the Conference. Lesotho would be an active participant in the forthcoming population conference to be held at Dakar in early December. The Government had already formed a national committee to coordinate the preparation of a national report on population in preparation for the International Conference on Population and Development and it had also completed the two United Nations population questionnaires. His delegation gave special thanks to all the countries that had contributed to the Voluntary Fund for supporting developing countries' participation in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, which would enable the least developed countries to participate in the preparatory meetings, as well as in the Conference itself. Finally, he thanked the Government of Egypt for its offer to host the Conference.

27. Mr. ELIASHIV (Israel) said that it was unfortunate that some delegations had attempted to use the Second Committee for political purposes. Israel had participated constructively in the debates and had expressed its willingness to share know-how and increase technical cooperation with interested developing countries. The reports and resolutions relating to the situation in the administered areas were negative, and encouraged hostility; they served merely to misdirect the people most in need of assistance, the Palestinian inhabitants of the territories, and to encourage them to continue hostile activities. He reminded delegations that Israel was currently the only State engaged in promoting the well-being, safety and social economic development of the Palestinians of the territories, who had made spectacular progress during the less than 26 years of Israeli administration.

28. He objected to the efforts to portray Israel as systematically opposing the provision of international assistance to the Palestinians and placing administrative and other obstacles in the way of such assistance. Israel not

(Mr. Eliashiv, Israel)

only welcomed such assistance, but fully cooperated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international organizations in implementing programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of the Palestinian inhabitants of the territories. Measures had been taken to intensify assistance in cooperation with UNDP and other agencies. However, Israel was unable to solve the economic needs of the territories by itself. It therefore encouraged the active participation and cooperation of international voluntary organizations as well as United Nations agencies. As was well known, UNDP had been unable to obtain even minimal funding for its established programme. It would be therefore advisable to redirect funds from futile surveys to UNDP projects which had already proved effective in meeting the needs of the population of the territories. Israel had repeatedly emphasized the need for additional resources to meet the growing requirements of the Palestinians. If sufficient means were allocated for projects aimed at improvement of the material conditions of the Palestinians, Israel would fully cooperate in their implementation. However, it firmly opposed any form of assistance to or cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

29. He was not suggesting that material well-being was an alternative to a political settlement. However, politically motivated debates and resolutions could only prejudice the ongoing efforts to advance peace in the Middle East, which were being conducted on the guidelines endorsed formally by the Madrid Conference. Since the beginning of the negotiations and especially since the formation of the new Government in Israel, progress had been achieved which had given renewed confidence in the future of the peace process and created the possibility of solving past conflicts and laying the foundation of a new Middle East. Israel had done its utmost to ensure the well-being of the population in the administered territories, and would continue to do so until such time as a political settlement was achieved.

30. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) said that the procedure adopted during the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council had permitted more efficient use of the time available and important conclusions had been reached at the high-level and coordination segments. In future sessions, Chile believed that efforts should be made to avoid formal statements; the latter could be submitted in writing and accepted as formally presented, enabling members to embark without delay on informal exchanges of views.

31. During its substantive session, the Council should pursue the objectives of rationalization and coordination implicit in the restructuring process and avoid rehashing the statements already made in the Second Committee. Similarly, time should not be wasted on debates where the speakers' interests and approaches to the problems were identical.

32. The inclusion of the heads of multilateral financial institutions in the high-level segment had been a most productive innovation and should be further developed at future sessions; in addition, the exchange of views with the heads of specialized agencies at both the high-level and the operational activities segments would greatly boost the efficiency of the Council's work.

(Mr. Gonzalez, Chile)

33. Chile welcomed the various initiatives put forward on the restructuring of the United Nations system, particularly those formulated by the Secretary-General, and believed that the consensus resolutions contained in the Council's report demonstrated wide acceptance of the crucial role to be played by the United Nations in the strengthening of international cooperation for development.

34. In the light of the inalienable link between the maintenance of peace and efforts to promote development and combat poverty, he hoped that the gains in world political security would also devolve to the benefit of international cooperation for development. Efforts to that end could only succeed if developing countries were offered an assured access to markets and technology.

35. With regard to coordination issues, Chile called for concerted efforts at the governmental and multilateral levels in two vital areas: the eradication of poverty and the prevention and combating of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

36. Mr. WRBA (Austria) said that the East-West rivalry had given way to a growing trend for the formation of regional trade blocs, which posed serious problems for countries outside such blocs. He noted the striking similarities between the development scenarios of the developing countries and the economies in transition, stressing that both groups needed international assistance attaining pluralistic democracy, establishing market economies and inviting international cooperation. Furthermore, the success of reforms in all those countries was also crucial to world stability.

37. Assistance should be viewed not as charity but as a means of encouraging investment and development of viable national market-based economic structures in the developing and transitional countries; particular emphasis must be placed on human capacity-building and the transfer of economic business know-how. Assistance efforts should not be wasted on investment in large scale and inefficient industrial projects, but should focus on the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

38. Austrian bilateral assistance was primarily channelled into educational programmes, as a key component of economic and political infrastructures. Programmes of cooperation had been established between academic institutions in Austria and the developing and transitional countries and training assistance was also being extended to media workers and diplomats.

39. Initiatives to improve micro-economic development conditions for those countries must be supported by corresponding macroeconomic measures, primarily in the form of financial assistance, by boosting the inflow of private capital into their economies, remedying their debt problems on a case-by-case basis and improving their access to industrialized markets. In that regard, Austria welcomed the free trade agreements concluded between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the countries in transition.

(Mr. Wrba, Austria)

40. As coordination was vital to economic growth and development, by ensuring a more rapid disbursement of resources, increased information sharing among donors and closer cooperation between the international financial institutions and recipient countries, the institutional capacities of the Economic and Social Council must be further strengthened. In addition, new and strengthened roles should be assigned to the regional economic commissions, while regional formations such as the Central European Initiative offered a productive new form of cooperation. Although the final responsibility for economic and social development rested with the recipient country itself, international assistance was not a one-way process, since all the parties concerned stood to benefit from common economic prosperity.

41. Mr. SHREIM (Observer for Palestine) with the concurrence of the Committee, made a statement in reply to the statement by the representative of Israel, pointing out that the question of Palestine lay within the scope of the Committee's work. The only way the situation in Palestine could be improved was through liberation of the occupied territories and restoration of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

42. His delegation asked only that Israel should abide by the provisions of the relevant resolutions and reiterated its commitment to finding a solution to the Palestinian problem through the current peace process.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.